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342 823 [171] [177] [177 791] 342 [782] [789]

BUILDING CUSTOMS. Like their village neighbours about them, Kols have numerous superstitions relating to houses and certain customs in connection with their construction. In India, it has been said, "a house should face north or east and not south or west, as the south is the region of Yama, the God of Death, who lives in Ceylon, and the west is the quarter of the setting sun."[1] Kols are not quite so particular in this respect although due to Hindu influences there is a general tendency to follow this plan. The Kols observe a general rule which is that if the house is to be longer than it is wide, the greatest length should be parallel to the north-south line.

When a new house is about to be built in a village, its actual position is generally determined in relation to the other houses about it. If the position of the house is not limited by other houses, and if there is doubt as to the location, a Hindu *pandit* is sometimes called to help decide the exact place. The *pandit* consults astrological factors as from these he is said to be able to determine whether the place is suitable or not, or if an evil spirit lives on that spot or nearby. If the report should be unfavourable, another spot is selected and the process repeated. When satisfactory, the *pandit* will also fix the day on which work should begin on the construction of the building. For this service he is paid two annas to a rupee according to the ability of the builder to pay.

If the house is not to be permanent little or no ceremony is observed in connection with its building, as it is considered a temporary structure which can be broken up in a few minutes.

If, however, the house is one with mud walls and is of a more permanent nature, there are certain customs which are quite generally observed. The foundation trench is first dug although this may be hardly more than a levelling of the ground on which the walls will stand. A "foundation stone" is usually placed somewhere in the trench, and beneath it are put two pice, some rice coloured yellow with turmeric and an areca nut (*Areca catechu*). The walls are constructed of mud with a certain amount of cow dung and straw mixed in to insure its stability.

One of the pictures[2] shows a Kol house in the process of construction. This particular house was being built on the site of another house. In this case, which was observed for some time, the following customs were noted, and found also to apply to other cases of building.

Just within the threshold of the single entrance to the house there

1 Russell and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces*, Vol. III, p. 86.
2 See Plate VIII.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca.1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

days it grew to be so tall that no Kol could mount it. They did not know what to do, and the only thing that they could think of (being jungle people) was to take an axe and shorten its legs. This they were about to do when the horse disappeared. A variant story of the above is that the horse given by Bhagawan had a peculiar power which made it impossible for Kols to ride upon it. At one moment it would be so small that it would run right out from under the man who was riding it, leaving him standing in the way ; on other occasions it became so tall that no one could climb upon it. Once, when it was in the latter form, a Kol in desperation took his axe and started to cut short the legs of the horse, but before he could actually do this it was snatched away by Bhagawan. Since then Kols have never used horses, for they were "deceived" by Bhagawan. They claim that they will never touch the dung of the horse, "not even if we are beaten." They have no taboos in the case of cow dung.

The Bharias, a tribe of cultivators, probably Mundas, found mostly in Jubbulpore district have a similar story which is recorded by Russell and Hiralal as follows :

> They have an aversion for the horse and will not remove its dung. To account for this they tell a story to the effect that in the beginning God gave them a horse to ride and fight upon. But they did not know how to mount the horse because it was so high. The wisest man among them proposed to cut notches in the side of the animal by which they could climb up, and this they did. But God, when he saw it, was very angry with them, and ordered that they should never be soldiers, but should be given a winnowing fan and broom to sweep the grain out of the grass and make their livelihood in that way.[1]

Some Rautiyas also have a taboo against the use of mattresses or quilts made from pieces of old clothes. They also seem to have a very definite taboo against the use of gold as an ornament, although it was often stated that this custom is passing away. It is not that they cannot *touch* gold, for this they may do, but they should not wear it on their persons. The reason for this goes back to Sheori the mother of Kols who would never touch gold. They now consider that this was probably a mistake on her part and that Bhagawan does not mean that Kols should avoid its use. This taboo is not observed by most of this Rautiya women, who use gold if they can afford it.

In the course of our investigations it became apparent that other

1 Russell and Hiralal, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. II, p. 250.

li:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Chapter VII

DEATH AND ITS ATTENDANT CEREMONIES

761 Death is an event which every Kol knows must be faced relatively early in life. One does not find a high proportion of aged Kols.[1] Among many primitive people death is usually ascribed to evil influences, but among the Kols this does not seem to be the common belief. While they believe that some deaths may be ascribed to evil influences they do not believe that all are caused that way. On the whole they take quite a natural view of the phenomenon. What the gods will that they do. Death also may be due only to natural causes or carelessness and no hidden malevolent cause is assumed. Death is usually deserved, for as one sows he also reaps. Hence an early death may be justly merited and caused by corrupt living. The Kols do not seem to be as superstition ridden as many groups are, yet we found indications that they hold the general local village point of view. On [771] the whole there is a wholesome attitude toward the supernatural—the world is not altogether evil.

763 The Approach of Death. When it is clear that a person is about to die there are certain things which ought to be done. It was found that the custom of bringing a cow to the bedside of the dying man [825 782] is known and is occasionally practiced. The dying man is asked to take hold of her tail. This will help him to get to heaven, for the cow is now considered an offering to God, and it is held that by holding the tail the [771 778] dying man makes this offering. If available, he is also made to drink a little Ganges water which is regarded as the very best of drinks to give him at that hour. Failing this, a sip of water in which gold has been washed [823] is efficacious. Gold is considered an incarnation of God and a symbol of purity. Again, some ordinary water into which some ground up leaves [824] of the *tulasi* plant (*Ocymum sanctum*) have been thrown is advantageous. Such drinks are said to purify the dying person and prepare the soul for its flight to other worlds. Hindu influences are apparent.

Usually, the person who is dying is placed on the ground to expire. The body is placed on the ground so that there may be close contact with Mother Earth. In some places it is said that a man may just as well die

[162 171] 1 This holds for primitive tribes in general, although any statement of age is unreliable. The 1931 census figures show that among the Kols there were only 100 men and 99 women per mile over forty. Other tribes show the following: Gond 154 men and 158 women; Maria 106 and 97; Baiga 143 and 148. Hindus rank higher—171 and 173 for Brahmins and 196 and 193 for Kunbis. *Census of India*, 1931, xii: 1, p. 131.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

on a bed, if he is on one, as on the ground, but it is mostly affirmed that the ground is the place for the dying person. The body should be put there only when it is certain that the person is about to expire. The place where the body is laid should be first plastered with cow dung if that is possible. The head should be toward the north, that is, pointing towards the sacred Ganges, and the feet to the south, for it is in that direction that the soul has to go to the land of death. Most of the graveyards are to the south of Kol villages.

As soon as it is ascertained that the person is dead the fact of death is publicly proclaimed by loud lamentations set up by members of the family. The lamentations do not seem to be linked up with the frightening away of evil spirits but are essentially a natural expression of grief; although to an outsider they may seem to be overdone. The body should not remain within the house, but should be immediately removed to a place made ready for it on the veranda or the small courtyard in front of the house. There the body is laid upon the ground and is covered with a new white cloth. Nothing is done to the body in the way of measuring its length or the tying of its toes.[1]

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FUNERAL. Immediate preparations are now begun for the funeral, which, under favourable circumstances should be underway within an hour or two. Friends prepare a bamboo sling (*latari*), made of two long bamboo poles with a few crossbars. On this the body is placed and fastened. A wooden *charpai* (rope cot) may serve just as well, and if the death occurred on one, this is used. Such a *charpai* has to be discarded anyhow, and in this case it is abandoned at the place of disposal. It is, however, immediately taken possession of by a low caste Hindu—a Basor or a Domar.

Occasionally the body is washed with a bit of cold water at the house before being transported to the place of burial or cremation. The most common procedure, though, is that the body is not washed till the funeral grounds are reached.

If the person has died in the evening, too late for immediate disposal, the body may be kept upon the earth outside the house during the whole of the night. Friends and relatives sit round the body which is regarded with awe and sometimes fear. A lamp is kept burning so that no evil spirit may get possession of the corpse and enter it in the darkness. Nevertheless no efforts are made to tie the corpse

[1] As soon as the body is laid out, some non-Kol groups measure its length and tie its big toes together in order to determine whether or not a live spirit has gained entrance to the body during the period between death and its removal to the cemetery. If a spirit has entered, the body will elongate and the thread about the toes will be broken.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

764 nor measure it to see whether a spirit has gotten within and caused the body to swell. Other groups, such as the Chamars,[1] are said to do this. In Rewa it was reported that they should not wait till daylight, but should make immediate arrangements even though the work has [184] to be done at night. They said that if a man died about 9 p.m., they would have the corpse buried by 3 a.m. This, though, seems to be the exception and not the rule; other groups have denied this, saying that no burial ever occurs at night.

[463] TRANSPORTATION OF THE CORPSE. The body is transported to the burial or cremation grounds on the *tatari* as noted above. The corpse is always carried by men. Among the Oraons it is said that the custom once was that the women always carried the corpse.[2] Four men at a time act as pall bearers. The men are frequently changed so that as many as possible may assist. Even a man's [578] "enemies" should come and help and if such a person does there will be no further enmity between him and the rest of the family. This will also appease the spirit of the deceased. The body is usually carried so that the feet go first. There is a division of opinion on this matter though, as some Kols claim that the head should always be kept in the [823] direction of the Ganges; hence in cases where the graveyard happens to be in the north of the village the head is carried forward. That the feet go first is generally true in other groups, in order, it is said, [775] that the spirit of the deceased may not find its way back. But the Kol has no objection to the spirit's return, and in fact expects it back; actually food is put out near the house for it. If the body is set down for a time the head should point north and the feet south.

On the way to the *masan* or *marghat* (burial place) or the *ghat* or *chita* (burning place) there should be no chanting nor singing nor music of any kind. Lamentation and weeping is all that is in order. The party goes in two groups, first the men with the bier, and, following a short distance behind, the women and the children. The women bring the water for washing the body as well as the oil and turmeric for anointing. As the party proceeds it is customary to drop some mustard seeds along the way, and *laddu* balls made with sweetened *lai* (puffed [787] rice) are also dropped at intervals. On the way back they try to see [775] if these have been picked up, and form an opinion as to whether the [776] omens are good or bad. Some say that if the spirit of the deceased returns he will pick them up. The *rai* seeds will keep the evil spirits

1 Briggs, G. W., *The Chamars*, pp. 100—101.
2 Roy, S. C., *Oraon Religion and Customs*, p. 179.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

busy and they will not bother the sweets. Often it is said that no particular ceremonies are observed as the body is being carried toward the burial place. Nothing is done at the time of the crossing of small streams.

Up to this time no work has been done at the funeral ground, and no one has gone ahead to prepare the grave, or pyre; all is done after the arrival with the body. The funeral ground is always near some stream or *nala* (dried up water-course). Kols practice both cremation and burial and it is usual that the dead are cremated only a few feet away from the place where the burials take place. The introduction of cremation may be due to Hindu influences. On the whole burials are far more common than cremations because, Kols suggest, they are much cheaper, and the subsequent formalities of gathering the ashes and taking them to a river are not necessary. Burial is much the simpler process, and is first described.

BURIAL (*Garna.*) The funeral party arrives at the *masan* where the body is put down, head north and feet south. Some of the men in the party have brought implements for digging and go to seek a suitable place to dig the grave. Others remain with the body and prepare it for burial.

Preparation of the Body. Up till this time it is usual to find that the person has on the clothes in which he died. As he was transported to the burial place a white cloth was thrown over him. Now this and the clothes are removed. In the case of a male corpse the men attend to the changing of the garments, the washing and anointing. If the corpse be of the opposite sex the women attend to everything connected with its preparation. The body is first washed with water brought by the women from the village tank or well in new *gharas*. No pregnant woman should carry water, nor should she accompany the procession to the funeral place. Some of the water may be retained for a ceremonial sprinkling when the people get back to the village. After the body has been washed and dried it is anointed with a mixture of *til* or *karwa* oil and *haldi*. Sometimes *ghi* is also rubbed on. The corpse is now ready to wrap in new clothes which have just been purchased. If the family is not able to afford new clothes old ones which have been carefully washed will do. The grave clothes must always be white no matter the sex or the age. No coloured cloth should be used. The old clothes are taken away by the Basor. The hair is oiled and combed and the body is made as attractive as possible. Sometimes, in more Hinduized situations, the *nai* is called to shave the body and to prepare the hair, but he is not usually called for a woman. If the body is

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764 that of a woman her glass bangles are broken and her metallic jewellery removed. The breaking of the glass bangles is a symbol of the dissolution of her marriage. From many enquiries it appears that neither food, coins or iron is put into the mouth of the deceased.

766 Up to this point it seems that the bodies of men and women are treated alike, except that persons of corresponding sex make them
843 ready. Only in rare cases a trace was found which indicated that there is the belief that the soul of the pregnant woman might become
[776] an evil spirit called a *churel*; preparations for burial of such women seemed to be uniformly the same as when the woman is not with child. Only once in scores of burials was there any indication that the pregnant woman was cut open after her death and the foetus removed and buried with her. This, if ever done among the Kols, is now a rare thing with them.

Digging the Grave. In the meantime the grave is being made
764 ready. The spot where it is to be dug must first be "purchased." This is done by one of the relatives who, when the place has been decided on, strikes the ground five times with his *phaora* or mattock. Two pice are then laid down on the ground and the digging proceeds. It is proper for the chief male mourner to break the first earth at the spot agreed upon. He may take out five or seven clods and thereafter relatives or friends lend a hand and complete the task. The grave is dug in a north-south line, and is about six feet long, three feet wide and four feet deep. "Chest deep" is the rule. No special implements are used in digging nor are the ones used considered unclean afterwards. When the grave has been dug there are still things which must be done before the body can be laid in it. One of the relatives sprinkles a little salt on the bottom of the grave. Usually, though, a cloth is
[263] laid in first, using the one which was thrown over the body after death, or the blanket on which he died, and the salt is sprinkled over this. The body is now lowered into the grave. One or two men enter the grave, the body is passed down to them and they place it in its proper position.

In the case of a woman she is buried flat on her back, face upwards, having her arms stretched by her side with the palms up. Male corpses are laid face downwards with the hands folded behind
● [823] over the buttocks, palms upwards. In both cases the head is to the north.[1] After the body is properly placed it is covered with another

[1] The direction in which the body is placed in the grave varies considerably among primitive tribes. The Mariahs have the head to the south; the Birhors likewise. The Hill Bhuiyas are laid on the left side with the head to the south and face to the west. The Munda tribes, Kharias, Hos and Santals bury their dead with the head north. Hodding states that the Santals burn with the head south. (*Census of India*, 1931; 1: 3, p. 102). Elwin finds that the Baigas bury with the head south. (*The Baigas*, p. 198).

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764 the house, and preferably they should not be brought into the village, but this is not avoidable in all cases. It is usually the custom to hang the *ghara* in a tree at some distance from the house and village, although at times the *ghara* is buried after being sealed and the place above it is marked for later exhumation.

It is preferable that the bones be taken direct from the burning [798 *ghat* to the place of disposal, a sacred river being the most suitable place. 823] The Ganges and the Nerbudda are the best for this purpose; but if there is no immediate hope of being able to go to one of these all the bones and ashes except a mere fraction are thrown into a tank or a stream nearby and the residue is kept for a future trip to one of them. It may be two or three years before this can be done, and if a relative cannot take it a friend may do so.

After the ashes have been collected the place where the body was burned must be treated. It is first plastered, this being done by the women of the house, though the chief mourner may begin it. Over the plastered portion is now scattered the following, or some of the following: rice, rock salt, mustard seed, millet seed, and a little milk. [775 A two-pice piece (*takka*) should also be deposited. These things have 789] a dual purpose: they serve the spirit of the departed and also protect it from the encroachment of evil spirits. The growth of the mustard plant, should it sprout, is said to be something in memory of the departed. Sometimes a little sugar "for the ants" is also scattered over the plastered place.

764 *Throwing the Ashes in the River.* We were told at a centre about 177 ten miles from the Nerbudda river, how the ashes should be dealt with 793 if taken to the river. In this place following the more Hinduized types of behaviour, they make use of a Brahmin priest. He performs a ceremony which is called *sirana*, meaning the "head side"; probably signifying the resting place of the head. The ashes are brought to him in the bag or *ghara* and he reads some sacred words from his books and makes a prayer to Yama, the god of death, to accept the spirit of the deceased. This is followed by a prayer addressed to the sacred river, Nerbudda *Mai*. She is implored to accept the ashes and to give peace to the departed spirit. The ashes are then cast into the river. The Brahmin receives a fee in cash or offerings.

764 Further north the Kols look to the Ganges as the river into which 798 the ashes should go if that is possible. The Kols in the south insist that the Nerbudda is just as sacred and as good as the Ganges. One man claimed that occasionally the ashes are divided, half being taken to the Nerbudda and the other half to the Ganges. The place where

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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762 cannot get such faithful wives—they prefer to run away," and there
522 was a hearty laugh.

766 In some parts of India the bodies of young children are sometimes buried under the floor of the house in which they lived but this custom does not prevail among the Kols. Children are buried in the regular *masan*, and not in a special place by themselves. If both mother and child die at the time of childbirth they are buried together in one grave. If they die on different days so that they cannot be buried together they are given separate burials.

Those dying abnormal deaths, by suicide, accident, or childbirth, are not treated differently from those dying in other ways. Kols are unlike most Hindus in this respect.

764 Sometimes grass plays a part in the funeral ceremonies, and in
765 Rewa State we found that Kols used *urai* grass (*Vetiveria zizanioides*)
824 at such a time. It was stated that at the time of bathing after the return
184 from the funeral ground a bunch of *urai* grass should be held in the right hand and that it too should be bathed. At least the chief mourner should do this. During the following days and until the time of the funeral feast this same bunch of grass should be carefully washed every day. On the day of the funeral feast it is thrown into the tank or river.

764 An interesting explanation of the use of small plugs if gold put into
823 holes bored in the front teeth came from the Rewa State. It was said
301 that when one died and the body was cremated the teeth would not be
184 consumed by the fire and the gold would still be in them Or even if the gold had melted out it would be in the ashes, and would be gathered with them and taken to the river. The throwing of gold into a
[782 river, particularly the Ganges, is a gift to the gods and pleases them
775] and the spirit gets *aram*—rest—in the after life in *baikuntha*—the abode of *Vishnu*.

764 Tattoo marks are said to have a certain significance at the time
304 of death. This applies to women as the men are not tattooed. If a
789 woman has tattoo marks on her forearm, and also on her upper arm, the arms are so folded when she is placed in the grave that the two tattooed places touch each other. This is said to somehow afford protection, please the gods and help the spirit on its way.[1] See also pages 29 and 30.

764 The chief mourner should also keep a piece of iron about his person
423 during the days of mourning, and possibly ever after. Sometimes, just before burial, this piece which is to act as a charm, is touched to the

1 See Crooke, *Op. Cit.*, p. 298.

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brow of the deceased seven times as the mourner encircles the body. It is then put into the clothes and carried about.

If a woman is carrying a *ghara* of water and sees a dead body she should at once throw out the water and return to get a fresh supply.

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KOL CONCEPTION OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH. It was noted that it is not a general belief among the Kols that the spirits of the dead return to trouble the family. The belief that the spirit of a pregnant woman becomes a *churel* is well known but even this is not consistently held. Further comments on this aspect will be found in a later section.[1]

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Generally speaking, the Kols believe that the spirits of the good dead go to a place called *baikuntha* which in a general sense corresponds to a place of happiness, or paradise. The wicked may sometimes return as evil spirits—a male as a *bhut* and a female as a *churel*; but one must be rather wicked to be so severely punished. Others say that the spirits of the bad go to *narkunda*, the Hindu hell, a sort of well or pit in the lower regions.

The Kols know the doctrine of *samsara* or transmigration of souls, but they seem to have neither a clear idea of its details nor of its implications. While this belief is usually admitted when they are questioned and reflected in some of their practices, nevertheless the general conception seems to play but a minor part in their thinking of the present and the future. "From now on we have nothing to do with one another."

1 See Chapter IX : Churel.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

and new ones brought in. Metal vessels are not affected. Hindu influences are apparent.

Rivers. The Kols say that there are but two rivers in India which are really sacred, the Ganges and the Nerbudda. They put the Ganges in the first place. Like most Hindus, Kols believe that it is good to bathe in these rivers and that to do so will help to wash away sin and give one merit. Kols in the vicinity of Jubbulpore frequently go to the Nerbudda, but seldom to the Ganges.

GODS AND GODDESSES WORSHIPPED BY KOLS. The worship to which the Kols really give themselves is not that of the gods of the Hindu pantheon, nor the forces or the powers of nature, but rather of the village deities—*deotas* and *devis*—who are intimately connected with their daily life and outlook. The majority of these deities are female, and it is such deities that really count. They are termed "mothers," and many have *mai* meaning "mother" attached to their name. The male deities are called *babas*, "fathers"; or *deos*, "godlings."

The Kol Pantheon. Among Hindus the Supreme Being is worshipped as Vishnu by the Vaishnavas and as Siva by the Saivas. Others who worship the Supreme deity exclusively as a female principle are called Saktas. The wives of Vishnu or Siva may be worshipped as Lakshmi and Parvati, thus introducing the female principle. Nevertheless the *devi* is secondary to the *deva*. In the case of Sakti worship, the Devi is made supreme and the absolute Brahma from whom Brahma, Vishnu and Siva proceed, can do nothing without her activity. This form of religion is seen particularly in Tantra and Sakta Hinduism.

The goddess of the Saktas may be called by the general term "Devi," but is worshipped in many forms. Various aspects of her life or achievements are remembered under different names, and she even may assume the form of a male. The worship of Devi is usually associated with Siva, rather than Vishnu, and many of the concomitants of Saivitism are associated with her worship.

From the evidence that follows, which is largely from the lips of Kols, it would appear that the Devi principle is the main factor at work in the Kols' idea of deity. Khermai is occasionally given an all-inclusive aspect. Bhagavati is essentially Devi. She has "six sisters" who are really forms of herself.[1] Kols have never been

1 "In all parts of South India the seven sisters are the most prominent among Dravidian deities." —Elmore, W. T., *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*, p. 19. He names the following as examples, though he notes their names vary from place to place: Polcramma, Ankamma, Muthyalamma, Dilli Polasi, Bangaramma, Mathamma and Renuka.

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He is given offerings of foods and vegetables and the *kos* offering is always acceptable. Because he is in the form of an animal, he should never be given an animal sacrifice. Among Hindus, Hanuman is also worshipped by the Vaishnavite sect which does not offer animal sacrifices. According to some Kols, Tuesday is the best day to offer Mahabir his sacrifices and these are offered only by men. The cocoanuts and foods offered and placed before him are, after prayer, taken up and distributed among the worshippers present. Some said that Mahabir is displeased if anyone should be worshipped before him. He has supreme control over all *devis* and *deotas*, and they have no power over him nor can they touch him. Therefore they worship him first. It was only one group that made this surprising claim.

Mansa deo. Mansa *deo* is also a household god, but is usually worshipped outside the house. A small platform of mud is raised by the wall just in front of the house, and on the wall some daubs (usually four) of *sendur* are put, and two small red flags are set up. Some ashes will often be found there and bangles, beads, and the like. If Mansa *deo* is not kept contented by the usual offerings of food and cocoanuts, he may attack the family. When he is happy, he wards off evil spirits.

Nanga baba. This word means "Naked Father," and the Barela Kols believe that he lives in the hills just above that town. He is greatly respected for his purity and plainness of life. His main task is that of stone sculpturing. Many of the oddities of geology about Barela are ascribed to him and his work, and some of the stones which he is said to have cut up, smoothed and flattened are used today for the building of bridges. Nanga *baba* fashioned them, they believe.

Sannyasi deo. This god is usually found associated with the village shrine. Probably he is the spirit of an ascetic of some kind, now elevated to the place of a *deota*. He is offered cocoanuts and tobacco, and protects people. The offering of tobacco probably confirms the conjecture that he was once a wandering *sadhu*. At the time of the *bawa* if he should enter and possess a devotee, the person possessed will reveal the presence of Sannyasi by taking up the iron tongs kept at the shrine and beating and pinching himself with them. To do this is a sure sign that Sannyasi *deo* has come and is truly present.

All of these deities are known to the masses of the people in Central India, and are propitiated from two points of view. This has been aptly described as "spirit scaring" and "spirit squaring."[1] If

1 Enthoven, R. E., *Folklore of Bombay*, p. 14.

[i.e., Mahabir or Hanuman.]

l:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

778 in these vessels, and a tiny hole pierced in the bottom so that the water
[271 drops over the shrine. This is popular in warm weather when the
776] *devi* should be cooled and the dripping water is pleasing to her.

17. *Tinsel* (*Tika*): Women often place a small round dot made
[302] of lac tinsel on the centre of their foreheads. It is usually of red colour.
These bits of tinsel are used in the shrines as well, and are stuck on it
here and there. The *devis* like them and they help to attract them to
the shrine.

18. *Stone* (*Patthar*). Bits of stone, usually pieces rounded in the
bed of streams and longish in shape, are often found somewhere about
the shrine. This may be an imitation of the *Salagrama* stones found
[831] in connection with the worship of Vishnu. Sometimes they are of
lingam type such as used in the worship of Siva.

This sums up the items usually found in Kol shrines. Probably
no shrine we saw had all these components, though the Kaimur shrine
came nearest to it. In addition to the above, there was at Kaimur
[823] an unusual feature. This was a flat stone which had apparently come
from some ancient Hindu temple and on which two figures were carved.
The *panda* of the shrine claimed that it was brought from Rewa and
[782 that the figures represented Sharda and Kalki. The stone must have
789] weighed about eighty pounds, but, it was claimed, if a *hom* offering
were performed when it was moved, it became very light and was
[386] easy to transport. It was coloured red with *sendur*. It will have
been noticed how imperfectly anthropomorphized the godlings are,
and that no special images are required.

The only Kol shrine which had brick walls and a roof was found
on the outskirts of Katni. The room measured about five feet square
inside, was four feet high, and had a flat roof. This was called the
shrine of Khermai, although on the flat top Barmai was said to dwell.
[824] Also tongs were there for Sannyasi *deo*. The usual bundle of *kans*
grass (*Saccharum spontaneum*) was on top of it.

778 The offerings, the lighting of the lights and the placing of the
793 necessary parts, are all in the hands of the *panda*. It is not part of his
work, however, to keep the shrine clean and properly plastered. This
is the duty of the women of the village, and they take turns in doing
it. The shrine is plastered at least once a week and cleaned oftener.
The sweepings, including ashes, dust, bits of cocoanut shells and the
like, are not swept to the ground beside the shrine, but are carefully
put into a basket by the woman who is doing the work. If they
should be thrown out upon the earth, evil will result, so they are carried
to a stream or a tank and thrown into the water. They are sacred ashes,
likened unto the ashes following a cremation and must be respected.

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776 entering into it in the form of a dog, a cat or an owl. They may assume almost any form and their bite is very poisonous. They can quickly change their shape and appearance. The female type, called *rakshasi* goes about in the likeness of a beautiful girl and seduces men. Nevertheless, this type of demon is easily fooled and if one is clever and does not lose his nerve he can outwit them.

Kols are also familiar with other kinds of spirits such as the *gayal*, the *pisach* and the *hogi*, but little seems to be known about them. The literature on tribes and castes is rich in spiritism and much might be compiled concerning spirits. The above represents the usual Kol point of view.

776 824 775 THE DWELLING PLACE OF SPIRITS. Kols believe that trees are the most likely place for spirits to dwell. The *banyan* tree seems to be the favourite place for the spirit, although it is said that the *churel* prefers a *nim* tree, particularly if broken or dead. It is claimed that the mango and the *bel* trees are not often inhabited by spirits. The tamarind tree is connected with the *jind*.

776 823 Spirits may also dwell in rocks and certain weird shapes in their appearance are probably due to the activity of some spirit living there.

776 825 764 Animals may become habitations for spirits, and some, like the *rakshasas*, freely enter into them. The graveyard and the burning grounds are sure to have some spirits dwelling near them and Kols avoid such places; or if they must pass by, go two by two. Such places should never be approached at night.

776 342 789 It was noted that spirits enter houses through doors and other openings. Doors are therefore generally surrounded by demon-scarers, and windows are never found. Evil spirits also enter and dwell in human beings, coming in through the mouth, eyes, ears or nose; so these points should be especially protected. They may also run up the legs or the arms and suitable bangles are worn to prevent this.

754 THE EVIL EYE: NAZAR. Men and women may also be possessed of an evil power to injure or distress one another. The evil eye, *nazar*, exerts a powerful and dangerous influence and is often evidenced by a squint or the loss of an eye. The person with an evil eye has an inherent power which may be transmitted through a mere glance, and this power strikes one as surely as a bullet. The very glance of such persons is particularly penetrating and it is not good to have any one gaze at you, for it may be that death is in the look. Children are particularly liable to be affected by the evil eye, and ill health and

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forms an effective bar to evil spirits who dare not cross that line. Sometimes it is dropped into milk as it is brought home, in order to protect it from the milk-loving *bhuts*.

Colours are also an effective protection. Black is particularly valuable as a prophylactic from the evil eye. Hence lamp-black is put on the face just beneath the child's eye. This disguises and renders him less attractive, and as a result the evil eye will not linger on him. Black marks on a white-washed tile or earthen pot ward off the evil eye in the case of crops. Black also pleases Kali and she is glad to see it.

Red frightens off demons and red flags found above almost every shrine have a dual significance : they please the good spirits and frighten off the evil ones. The *sendur* (vermilion) put on the bride and groom is a protective at that vital time. Following the purification ceremony, six days after the birth of the child, the mother's feet are coloured red.

Yellow also protects and there are anointings with turmeric in oil at the times of birth, wedding and death. At such crises of the soul they keep away forces bent on evil.

White is also used : a white *pot*, or daub, placed on the side of the face, immediately in front of the ears, is said to be protective in the case of the child and wards off the evil eye.

Copper. Iron and copper bangles are common among the Kols and some say that of the two copper is to be preferred and is more effective ; it was offered to Hanumanji the monkey god, and is hence very sacred. On no account should this sacred metal be used for dishes nor *lotas*, especially if the *lota* is to be taken out for latrine purposes. To do this would insult Hanumanji and show disrespect to copper. The copper bangle is a very potent charm, and among Kols it is often found that children have a copper anklet on one foot and an iron one on the other. The same applies to the wrists. The little boxes frequently seen attached to strings about the neck, containing powerful protectives such as tiger's claws or *mantras* (written charms), are generally made of copper.

Incense and Smoke. Incense attracts good deities and, conversely, repels evil personalities. At the time of worship incense is thought of as having this dual function. The odour of burning *ghi* is very effectual in this respect. Smoke usually repels demons and if articles which cause an evil odour are dropped into the fire they are driven away. In the Kol birth chamber the baby is passed through smoke soon after birth, and for some days the air in the lying-in room is kept smoky by means of a fire smoldering somewhere within it.

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789 *Iron* is, on the whole, probably the most common of protective metals; and while some put copper above iron, nevertheless in the case of the 823 Kols, iron appears to be more widely used than copper. The use of iron takes many forms. A woman should always have a bit of iron about her as she is usually exposed to evil influences more than are the men folk. This may take the form of a bracelet, an anklet, a ring on the finger, or an iron ring about the neck. Again it may be just a piece of the metal tied somewhere in the garments or on a string about the waist. [755] A sick man should always have iron about him to prevent further demonic influences during his period of helplessness. An iron key is a pro- [513] tective and even nails in shoes are useful in this respect. A piece of iron ought to be under the head as one sleeps and iron nails are often driven into the four corners of a wooden cot should the Kol sleep on one. In the case of children iron helps to repel the evil eye. At the wedding [585] time the bridegroom carries iron about with him, and iron is found in the wedding booth.

Iron protects houses from the entry of evil spirits and makes their habitation there impossible. Therefore, when a house is built [342] iron is buried under the floor, particularly near the threshold. Even though unseen by the human eye it will influence the demons and they fear to enter and abide in the house. Perhaps *bhuts* are thought [775] of as still living in the stone age and dreading the new-fangled iron and its power to break the strongest things of which they know.

789 *Lac*, obtained from the gum of the *Khairwar* tree (*Acacia catechu*), and prepared in the form of bangles and beads, averts the evil eye and [314] wards off spirits. This is variously coloured.

Lampblack is widely used for children and protects them from the evil eye. While it disguises them and renders them less attractive, [751] it also has the practical purpose of protecting the eye from the glare of the sun. The lampblack, mixed with oil to make a paste, is placed just below the eyes and often gives the child a weird and unnatural appearance.

789 *Leather* is a very common devil-scarer throughout India and has its uses for the Kols, such as the custom of employing it in connection 237 with the building of houses. For protection, in this instance, an old 291 shoe will generally be found stuck somewhere about the wall which is being built. This is apparent in the picture appearing in connection with building customs.[1] If they can be afforded, leather shoes with nails in them are a double protection, and no Kol goes on a long journey with- [484] out taking a pair of country shoes with him even though he seldom uses them. He will carry them hanging from a stick or in his hands.

1 See plate VIII.

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it is like the chaff being driven away and lost. While the *sups* is being waved the Baiga blows, and thus the divine afflatus is communicated to the person.

There is also a magic way of warding off the evil eye and removing its power from one affected by it. A Baiga is called, who, after the usual preparations and offerings, takes a stick and dips it in *til* oil. This is lighted and held over a vessel filled with water, all being performed in the presence of the person suspected of being the victim of the evil eye. If drops of the burning oil fall into the water with a hissing sound the person affected at once begins to feel the influence of the evil eye passing from him. But if the hairs on his body begin to stand up and he begins to feel faint, it is a sure sign that something is wrong and that there is an evil spirit in the case, or that the power of the evil eye requires still stronger measures to remove it.

Kols also believe in, and practise, what may conveniently be called "cross-roads magic". The afflicted person is carried on a bed to the particular cross-roads where the ceremony is to be performed. He is set down in the centre and the friends who brought him make the offerings, which should be sacrificed in the same way as they would be at the village shrine. This may be done at any time of the day or night, but to be really effective it should not be witnessed by any stranger. If some one should approach while the sacrifices are being offered he will be warned away, for if he comes he may break the spell or may himself be affected. It is thought that the disease afflicting the person is loosed at the cross-roads and will attach itself to the first person who passes that way. For this reason Kols usually avoid cross-roads and if possible will pass by some other way. Sometimes a scape animal is released after the offerings are made, and it is believed that he will carry the disease away.

MEDICINES AND MAGIC. Among Kols illness and disease are often ascribed to the work of unfriendly spirits. Cholera and small-pox are particularly the work of the goddesses, and only through them can they be controlled. Other diseases are due to lesser evil spirits. In spite of this, there is also the attitude that in many cases illness is due to the foolishness of man, and that many types of illness can be cured by means of home remedies. Failing these, or any other explanation, the illness is looked upon as indeed the work of a spirit. There are many remedies in use by the Kols for the diseases which abound in India, and the remedies in common use among them are listed below.

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648 Kols, Baigas and Gonds live in close association under village condi-
756 tions. The Baiga priest is revered by both Kols and Gonds, and it is
755 asserted that he has a *deva* living within him which gives him insight as to what should be done. The Baiga, however, is more intefested in the occult than he is in prescribing remedies, and if he believes the illness is due to a spirit, he performs over the ill person the *supa* ceremony. It is said that he takes a *supa* (winnowing fan) and places on it a little lamp (*diya*), *ghi* being used to make it burn. The Baiga sits before this and begins to mumble *mantras* and to concentrate on the fire. He calls the *devi* or *deva* when he feels that the time is ripe. When the *devi* arrives, the Baiga falls down in a trance, for the spirit has full possession of him and speaks through him to the people present, telling them just what they must do. This usually takes the form of the demand for some offering to be made either to the goddess speaking through the Baiga or to some other deity named by her, generally an animal: a chicken, goat or pig. As soon as the trance is over, the members of the household begin to take steps to fulfil the words spoken through the Baiga, for the man should start to mend as soon as the offerings are accomplished. If nothing is done, the *devi* will be angry, and the patient is almost sure to die. Should the man die in spite of the offerings, it is said that something was probably wrong with them and the *devi* was not pleased. This ceremony is termed by the Kols *totak vidha*, and requires the winnowing fan, the lamp burning in an earthen vessel, and the presence of the deity. For this service the Baiga charges a fee depending upon the capacity of the family to pay. The fee is decided on by the Baiga after careful inquiry and is said usually to be high. If it should not be paid, the *devi* is angered and the man may die. Sometimes, they say, the ceremony puts them in debt, hence they may hesitate to call in a Baiga.

755 Another form of the *supa* ceremony is this: the person from
[516] whom a spirit or a disease is to be cast is told to sit cross-legged on
[823] the ground, facing east. Those who cure come from that holy direction, made holy because the sun rises from there. Water is sprinkled on the *supa* cleansing it. The person is then fanned by the sorcerer, first from the front and then from the back. As he does this he repeats certain *mantras* supposed to be efficacious in driving evil away. The man is asked to move a few feet away from the *supa* lest it be not exactly the right spot, and the process is repeated.

[237] The sickle is often used in casting out spirits and diseases. The person is asked to sit facing the east. Ashes from burnt cow dung are blown over him from the hand of the Baiga, and then the sickle is waved over and about his head. This will drive the demons away.

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513 823 Kols generally say that they, unlike the Hindus, are not particular about the direction of their head when they sleep. Inside their own houses they can make their couch in any direction. When they sleep outside, however, they should lie with their heads to the east. And yet, further questionings have revealed, that most Kols have a definite prejudice against sleeping with the head to the north, [764] whether inside or outside the house. No doubt this is because the dead are placed in that position.

231 825 [673] [681] [627 574] ANIMALS AND TREES. *Animals.* Among the Kols there is an exaggerated respect for the cow and it is said that she is the most sacred of all animals. To kill a cow is to commit a great sin, much worse even than killing a Brahmin. In the strictest sense it is murder, and anyone killing a cow even accidentally should make a pilgrimage to the Ganges and offer a gift to the river. On his return he is required to give a feast to the community. Kols as a rule are not rich in cattle and those they possess are a poor lot.

825 [773] [629 574] The palm squirrel (*Sciurus palmarum*), is very commonly found in the villages and frequents the houses of people. Kols have a great respect for this creature and some would even rank it above the cow, for, one said, to kill such an animal was as bad as killing a hundred Brahmins! Popular legend has it that when Rama was building his bridge from India to Ceylon in order to rescue Sita, these squirrels helped him by bringing dust on their tails. Rama was pleased with this act of devotion and stroked the backs of the squirrels and to this day the marks of his hands can be seen in the black strips on their backs. Any one who happens to kill a squirrel should give a feast. Boys will never shoot nor molest them.

231 825 [183] The cat is likewise revered by Kols and is usually called *mai*, mother. In the ordinary sense Kols do not keep nor care for cats; they are just a part of the village and roam it freely in search of food while no one claims particular ownership. Sometimes they multiply to an alarming extent and in one village it was discovered that no chickens could be raised due to the presence of the cats who killed and ate the younger chickens. No effort was made to change this condition nor rid the village of the cats. That would be a breach of custom.

[783] The dogs too are the general property of the village. To Indian villagers the dog is often an impure animal, but this is not true in the case of the Kols, for the touch of the dog is not defiling. He is a village watchman, and in a sense a custodian of their safety, as he gives the village warning should strangers approach. To slay him is to slay

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and fearful for at least twelve years. Usually such spirits are not dangerous, and some have said that after twelve years they go to Bhagawan or may be born into the world again. 762 775

Sometimes the woman may die in childbirth and the child be born alive. If so, it is thought very likely that the child owes its life to an evil spirit, who desires it for some evil purpose, and hence the child may really be a bhut. It is very difficult to get a wet nurse for such children and they usually do not survive very long. 845 776 775

We happened to be in a Kol village a few hours after an earthquake and we asked a group what caused the movement of the earth. Nearly all at once agreed that the earth shook because of *pap*, or sin. One or two though, began to think and said that the real reason was that the earth rested upon the heads of *Nag*—a many-headed serpent, and that once in twelve years he had to shift the earth ffom one head to another and that produced an earthquake. But when confronted with the obvious fact that an earthquake came oftener than once in twelve years they were puzzled and could not account for it. The latter explanation is the one frequently advanced among Hindus, but Kols were not very familiar with it. 823 [773 177]

Rain, so intimately connected with the welfare of forest people, may often be brought to pass by magical processes, and there are frequent instances of this among the tribes and castes of Central Provinces. In many of these rites nudity is an essential part, for moved by pity at their representation of poverty, Indra or some rain *devta* will grant refreshing showers. No trace of nudity practices was found among the Kols. The more sophisticated Kol believes that rain is sent only by Indra, the Vedic god of rain, and that it is only through a Brahmin that the gift of rain may be secured. 821 [291] [177]

Some Kols use frogs in an attempt to bring the rains. Frogs and rains are intimately associated in their minds, for in the weeks that precede the coming of the monsoon, the frogs croak long and loudly, and it is thought that their calls bring the showers. So if the monsoon is delayed and there is a drouth, Kol boys will round up all the frogs they can. The larger they are the better for this purpose. A thread is tied round the leg of each frog and they are then dragged about the village. As they pass by houses the people living there come out and sprinkle a bit of water over them. The boys and their frogs finally end up at the village shrine and the latter are tied before the *devi*. It is said that the croaking of the frogs at the shrine will affect the *devi* resident there and she too will long for cooling showers, so she gets to work and uses her influence and power to help bring the rain to pass. 821 825 789

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Dancing is invariably accompanied by singing and drumming. [535] Liquor is often consumed in connection with it, and in one place, when [533] seeking to see a dance, we were told that they would give an exhibition [273] only if we bought them some liquor. The intoxicated state also [583] lends aid to elopement.

The *dadra* dance is the most popular and most Kol dances are purely *dadras*. On such an occasion the men first gather around in the evening and sing and play for an hour or so. Finally a few women, [292] one to six in number, put on the dancing costume over their *saris*, for without this they will not dance. This costume consists of two pieces: a red and yellow *lahanga*, which is like a dress made of many folds and is tied at the top so that the bottom just sweeps the ground, leaving the feet barely visible. The head is covered with the second portion, the *chunariya*, a shawl made of the same material as the *lahanga*. The shawl is thrown over the head and is held by the left hand so that when the person is standing erect the face is covered. [301] On the feet are *ghunghunis*, ankle bracelets, which make a jingling sound.

After putting on the dancing costume, which is usually done right before those present, the dancers go and stand facing the players. If there are several who are to dance they do not necessarily go at the same time, and when they get there they do not keep together in their movements. While one is standing the other may be whirling. The dancers usually stand for some minutes in silence in front of the players who are singing to them and coaxing them to begin their dance. Then the knee is slightly bowed and the dancer begins to whirl. If one starts this movement in a clockwise direction, that direction is apparently followed by all the dancers, and the other direction is not taken. On the other hand, if they begin with the counter-clockwise [823] movement then that is retained for the evening. On the whole the clockwise movement is favoured and is mostly used, but it is said that there is no hard and fast rule about it. The dancer may turn a number of times, but there is no set number of turns, it must fit into the song. The whirling is not particularly rapid, nor is it done on the heel. Having [533] completed the revolutions the dancer stops, facing the drummers and the male singers, and begins her song. The men cease from their singing, but accompany her on their drums. As the dancer sings she moves by slow steps first to the left and then to the right, but not more than four or five feet in either direction from the original position. As the feet move the legs are shaken so that the anklets make a jingling sound. As a rule the shawl is held closed by the left hand, but when bending over the left hand is kept free, and it is used along with the